

Blessings, Please!

Pull up to any fast-food drive-through, and you're most likely to be greeted with a voice that says, "Welcome...may I take your order please?" In today's Templates of Truth, we see a menu from which God orders blessings for the benefit of those who live faithfully for Him.

Solomon wrote in the Proverbs: *The curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked, but He blesses the dwelling of the righteous* (3:33). The books of Exodus and Leviticus reveal God's desire to have a people that He could His own, to dwell in their midst, and to bring them into a land rich with abundance. Maintaining an environment of holiness was essential to this plan, so God led His people to construct the tabernacle that would house His presence and to establish the sacrificial system in order to atone for their sins. Above all, He gave them commandments and statutes, so they would always know what He expected of them for holy, obedient living.

As an added incentive, God gave them the promise of blessings in return for their faithfulness: *You shall thus observe My statutes and keep My judgments so as to carry them out...then I will so order My blessings for you...* (Leviticus 25:18,21). In the verses that follow, God reads the menu of blessings. They include produce in the land, prosperity, abundance of crops, and civil & national peace on every front. Righteous obedience is the seedbed in which divine presence & power thrives. So, God promises: *I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people. I am the Lord God...* (Leviticus 26:11-13). As Solomon declared, these blessings are still available to us today. All we have to do to receive them is to live holy lives, pleasing to God.

Before we get too carried away, there is a flip-side to the menu we should also be sternly aware of: *But if you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments...I, in turn, will do this to you...* (Leviticus 26:14-16). In the verses that follow, God reveals seven categories of judgment: (1) Distress & terror; (2) Disease; (3) Drought & famine; (4) Defeat before their enemies; (5) Death from war, animals & plagues; (6) Destruction of their cities & nation; and, (7) Dispersment & exile among their enemies. That's an intense list of deterrents! Living life with no respect for God or any regard for the Biblical commands He requires will eventually reap these curses into our lives as well.

The problem with many people today is that they fail to consider any possible connection between the challenges of their life and their chosen lifestyles & behaviors. Many struggle through financial loss, failure in their careers, destruction of their plans & possessions, and even suffer health issues. We conclude, "that's life;" or just the natural consequences to a bad economy or an imperfect world. But the Bible says, *With reproofs Thou dost chasten a man for iniquity; Thou dost consume as a moth what is precious to him* (Psalm 39:11). Our money, our fancy clothes, our successful career, the big house, new car, popularity, social acceptance, a secure future – they can all become the things we rely on rather than God. So, in our acts of disobedience to Him, God may take away the things that have become precious to us; the things

we have replaced Him with, so that we have nothing left to desire, but Him once again.

From which menu do you prefer to order? Blessings or cursings? It is not money that fills the order, it is living - attitudes, choices, words, behaviors and lifestyles. As long as these things manifest holiness, God orders His blessings for us. When these things manifest disobedience & rebellion against the commands and expectations of His Word, God orders curses – applications of chastisement and discipline; not meant to punish us, but to compel us back into a loving, faithful relationship with Him. May God take your order, please?

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide in Christ. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in the Lord Jesus.

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